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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 12/16/09

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ARTICLES:

(1) Commentary on GOJ's Futenma relocation policy: Discuss the image of the alliance, bring trust back to the Japan-U.S. relationship

ASAHI (Page 3) (Full)  
December 16, 2009

The government has postponed a solution to the Futenma issue until next year and decided to look for new relocation sites. With this, there is now a possibility that the existing relocation plan that calls for building a replacement facility in the coastal area of Henoko in Nago City, Okinawa, may be scrapped and Japan may renegotiate this issue with the U.S. The U.S. side is beginning to

suspect that the Hatoyama administration intends to scale back the Japan-U.S. alliance. The only way to find a solution is to engage in a "strategic dialogue" on the ideal form of the security alliance, even if this would seem a roundabout way.

With the government policy confirmed by the three ruling parties on Dec. 15, the current plan should probably be regarded as void. This will force the U.S., which has insisted that the current plan is the "only feasible plan" so far, to make an about-face and is certain to invoke a strong reaction.

The distrust of Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama, who told President Obama "trust me" when he sought the early implementation of the current plan at the bilateral summit in November, will be further aggravated. With the procrastination that went on after the summit, U.S. government officials have now come to say "We don't trust him" without any qualms. This is an unprecedented situation.

The foremost reason why the situation has become so serious lies in the Hatoyama administration's basic stance on managing the alliance.

On top of the Futenma issue, the Hatoyama administration regards the secret nuclear agreement, the Status of Forces Agreement, the omoiyari yosan (so-called sympathy budget, i.e. host nation support), and other issues that affect the very foundation of the security alliance as a "negative legacy" from the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) administration and is working on rectifying or revising them.

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While it is true that from Japan's perspective, there are indeed many points that require revision, the problem is that the U.S. does not necessarily think of them all as a "negative legacy." Sheila Smith, senior researcher at the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations who is a supporter of the U.S. Democratic Party, points out that, "Complaints about the LDP should not be confused with complaints about the U.S. government."

Particularly with regard to the current Futenma relocation plan, there is a strong sense on the U.S. side that they accepted the plan only because the Japanese government proposed it and guaranteed that it will be implemented. The Obama administration's position on this point remains unchanged. On the other hand, the Hatoyama administration asserts that since there has been a change of administration through an election, it is a matter of course to review policies. The two sides are not on the same page at all.

Even if renegotiations start in the new year, discussions on Futenma relocation alone will probably not solve the problem because the gap between the two sides is too wide.

The U.S. side is now concerned and suspicious that the steps taken by the Prime Minister to settle the issues related to the "negative legacy" are a manifestation of his intent to scale down the alliance and reduce its capability.

When he was president of the old Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) (before its merger with the Liberal Party in 2003), the Prime Minister contributed an article in a magazine in 1996 asserting that the Japan-U.S. security treaty is a "relic of the Cold War" and that Japan should do away with its "excessive reliance on the U.S." and "shift to a security treaty without the permanent stationing of troops." Behind such argument is the thinking that the present alliance framework is overkill, and Japan is being made to bear an unnecessarily heavy burden.

On the other hand, the U.S. side openly claims that the present alliance framework is a "great bargain" (according to Lieutenant General Edward Rice, U.S. Forces Japan commander). It argues that thanks to the alliance, Japan is able to enjoy the current level of deterrence and security with a total defense budget of approximately 5 trillion yen, which is less than 1 percent of its GDP. There is, again, an enormous gap in the perception of the two sides.

Delving deeper into this debate, there is another perception gap with regard to the level of threat that Japan needs to prepare against. The "threat" that the DPJ talks about in its manifesto only refers to "North Korea's nuclear tests and missile launches." The U.S. side reckons that along with North Korea, the alliance also needs to deal with the "changes brought about by China's rise" (in the words of Ambassador to Japan John Roos). In the U.S. administration, Okinawa is regarded precisely as the strategic base for engaging with China.

If the Prime Minister and the administration are thinking of reducing Japan's "reliance on the U.S.," it should discuss this squarely with the U.S. in a way that is visible to the people.

The article written by the Prime Minister in the past asserted that the reduction of U.S. forces can be achieved by setting up a new multilateral framework for security dialogue in East Asia and creating an international environment that will prevent

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"contingencies in the Far East" from occurring. It is believed that his present concept of East Asian community is an extension of this theory.

The "new deliberation process for deepening the Japan-U.S. alliance" agreed upon by the two leaders in November has not started as a result of the Futenma problem. Why not commence this forum for the two administrations to discuss the basic question of the ideal form of the alliance as a prerequisite to the Futenma relocation talks or simultaneously with the talks?

Only by doing this can the U.S. side's suspicions be cleared and clues to restoring trust be found. This may also make possible "frank discussions on pending issues between the two countries within a relationship of trust," as the Prime Minister stated in his policy speech (to the 173rd Diet session on Oct. 26).

(2) Editorial: Postponement of Futenma decision will further endanger Japan-U.S. alliance

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)  
December 16, 2009

The government's decision to postpone determining a relocation site for the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Okinawa will end up endangering the Japan-U.S. alliance, which is already in a critical state. People are concerned about the Hatoyama administration's steps hollowing out the Japan-U.S. alliance and its inclination towards China in contradiction of the Prime Minister's claim that the Japan-U.S. alliance is the cornerstone of Japan's foreign policy.

Holding a meeting yesterday of the Ministerial Council on Basic Policies at the Prime Minister's Official Residence (Kantei), the government decided to put off determining the relocation site for Futenma until next year. The government also decided to (1) allow the three ruling parties to look into candidate relocation sites, including the existing plan; (2) propose to Washington the establishment of a Japan-U.S. consultative body; and (3) include in the fiscal 2010 budget relocation-related spending based on the existing plan.

Although there was an idea to make a decision by next May, the government has given up on it due to opposition from the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The existing Japan-U.S. agreement was barely salvaged by the decision to include the relocation costs in the fiscal 2010 budget. The future of talks among the three ruling parties and Washington's response remain to be seen. The decision to postpone a conclusion will contribute to making the Futenma base, which divides and occupies a residential area in Ginowan, a permanent fixture on Okinawa.

As ministers responsible for the management and operation of the Japan-U.S. alliance, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa repeatedly urged Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama to confirm the Japan-U.S. agreement before the end of the

year. However, the Prime Minister put consideration for the SDP ahead of their advice.

"The realignment road map that we've already agreed to is the best plan," State Department Spokesman Ian Kelly said on Dec. 14. There are no signs that the gulf between Japan and the United States will

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be bridged.

Foreign Minister Okada has repeatedly expressed alarm about the current state of the Japan-U.S. alliance. The alliance has already suffered damage on the diplomatic front.

If a formal Japan-U.S. summit in Copenhagen is scrapped, Japan will lose the chance to persuade the United States on the issue of global warming. Is Prime Minister Hatoyama, who is enthusiastic about environmental issues, aware that his decision will result in such a consequence?

"Japan-U.S. ties are strained," said Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka in Shanghai on Dec. 14. "It is a realistic approach to first strengthen Japan-China ties and then resolve the problems with the United States." This statement will also cause international doubts about the Hatoyama administration's foreign policy.

The Yamaoka statement reflects a logic that reverses the places of the traditional Japan-U.S. relationship and the Japan-China relationship. It also includes content leading to negation of (the Japan-U.S.) alliance. In its manifesto (campaign pledges), the Hatoyama administration pledged to form an equal and close partnership between Japan and the United States. If the Yamaoka statement is designed for Japan to deal with the United States with China's help, it is not a concept to form an equal partnership with the United States; nor is it compatible with the goal of forming a close partnership with the U.S.

In the grip of DPJ Secretary General Ichiro Ozawa, the Hatoyama administration's foreign policy appears from the standpoint of other countries to be moving away from the United States and inclining towards China. This will spread anxiety among Southeast Asian nations, which have mixed feelings about China.

(3) Shaky Japan-U.S. security arrangement (Part 1): Danger of national defense without continuous presence of U.S. forces

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)  
December 15, 2009

The issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station has been rattling Japan-U.S. relations. How will the Japan-U.S. alliance work for Japan's national interest? Set off by the conflict over the Futenma issue, such a question is being posed to both Japan and the U.S., prior to the 50th anniversary of the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty next year.

A Hatoyama vision with no hope for success

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has been slow to move to reach a conclusion on the Futenma issue. A person who discussed this issue with Hatoyama said: "Even now Mr. Hatoyama seems to have in mind the idea of realizing a security arrangement without the continued presence of U.S. forces."

The main reason for the current standstill on the Futenma issue is the strong opposition from a junior coalition member, the Social Democratic Party, to the existing plan to relocate the facility within the prefecture. But senior members of the government and the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) have said that the prime minister

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has little awareness of the need to protect Japan's security with the U.S.'s military power.

Hatoyama came up with a policy vision entitled "a Japan-U.S. arrangement without the continued presence of U.S. forces" in the latter half of the 1990's, when he was president of the former DPJ.

In February, when he was serving as party secretary general, he stated that if a missile defense network is completed, "Japan's security will be ensured even under the defense-only policy and without depending on U.S. power."

Under the current security system, the U.S. is obligated to defend Japan, but Japan is not obligated to defend the U.S. The question is to what extent Japan will be able to ensure its security without the continued presence of U.S. forces.

Andrew Marshall, a famous military strategist who still heads the Defense Department's Office of Net Assessment although he is now 87 years old, secretly produced with researchers this spring an internal analysis paper entitled "Japan's future defense system." Marshall thoroughly investigated Japan's resources, population dynamics, public opinion, and other things to determine its options 20 years hence.

Although the paper's contents have not been released, according to a person involved in producing the paper, the conclusion was that there was no better option for Japan than the Japan-U.S. alliance. The paper predicts that it would become difficult for Japan to counter rising China without the Japan-U.S. alliance owing to its fiscal deficits and dwindling birthrate and aging population.

The U.S. military has maintained a powerful war-making capacity. The U.S. has deployed about 50 F-15 fighters at Kadena Air Base in Okinawa and about 40 F-16 fighters at Misawa Air Base in Aomori. In Okinawa, there are about 18,000 Marines, and the Seventh Fleet has deployed 17 warships, including one aircraft carrier and nine Aegis destroyers, in Japan. Behind the deployment of warships are China's military buildup and North Korea's nuclear development.

Marine units are said to be units in readiness to cope with crises on the Korean Peninsula and in Taiwan. But a security authority said: "Should Marines leave Japan, it will become difficult to prevent crises on the peninsula or in Taiwan from spreading to neighboring countries. Accordingly, in the event that a conflict breaks out on the Senkaku Islands, it will likely become difficult to make a quick response." If Japan intends to boost its self-defense capability, a huge defense budget will become necessary. The nation's defense budget amounts to approximately 4.7 trillion yen, slightly more than 0.9 PERCENT of the nation's gross domestic product (GDP). With this low percentage, Japan is not included in the list of the top 100 countries.

Barrier to equipment, operations

Look at other U.S. allies' defense budgets. According to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the ratio of defense spending as a portion of GDP is 2.7 PERCENT in the case of South Korea and 2.4 PERCENT in Britain and Australia.

If Japan is willing to raise the percentage to the level of South Korea, it needs to add approximately 14.1 trillion yen to the

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defense budget. That figure would account for slightly less than 60 PERCENT of the social-security-related expenses in the government's general outlays. A sharp increase in Japan's defense budget might provoke a fierce response from China and South Korea.

In addition, there is a high barrier to operations. The Maritime Self-Defense Force's operation system is premised on joint operations with the U.S. Navy. The MSDF possesses equipment mainly for antisubmarine operations and minesweeping, missions for which the U.S. has insufficient equipment. A senior MSDF official said: "Under the current system, the MSDF cannot fight in a serious emergency situation on its own, separately from U.S. forces." Its missile defense system, too, depends on U.S. spy satellites for intelligence gathering.

While depending on the U.S. and being lightly armed, Japan became an economic power. If it intends to change this pattern, Japan must be prepared to shoulder enormous expenses and risks. The Hatoyama administration has decided to delay the compilation of an outline of defense policy until next year. With no discussion conducted on national security, the Japan-U.S. alliance is now under strain.

(4) Shaky Japan-U.S. security arrangement (Part 2): Call for reducing military bases in Japan beginning to emerge in U.S.

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)  
December 16, 2009

"Is no decision a decision?" U.S. government officials have been reacting coolly to the Hatoyama administration's decision (to delay a conclusion) on the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station. In Washington, the Hatoyama administration's flip-flop has been treated as if it is a funny story.

Michael Green, former senior Asian desk director of the National Security Council (NSC), explained clearly: "Since there is no other option than the existing plan, delaying a conclusion is a risky strategy. The delay might derail the whole plan for the realignment of U.S. forces." In the administration of President Barack Obama, there is not much of a celebratory mood for the 50th anniversary next year of the revision of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty.

Vacuum in military power

In the Philippines, relations with the U.S. turned sour under President Corazon Aquino, who assumed the post after overthrowing the pro-U.S. Marcos administration in 1986. The Mutual Defense Treaty signed between the two countries lost its substance. Eventually, the U.S. started withdrawing its troops in 1991 (the withdrawal process ended in 1994) after nearly 100 years of deployment since the U.S. took control of the Philippines from Spain at the end of the Spanish-American War.

Clark Air Base and Subic Bay Naval Base on Luzon Island were the U.S. military's largest bases overseas. The Defense Department insisted that the presence of the two bases was indispensable from the security strategic point of view in the Asia-Pacific region. The White House, however, decided to move the line of defense in the South China Sea to Guam, also taking into consideration the expenses needed to reconstruct the facilities damaged in a volcanic eruption.

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China took advantage of the vacuum in military power. China sent its troops to islands for which the sovereignty status remains unknown, such as the Parcel Islands and the Spratly Islands, and had effective control over these islands. Upset by China's moves, the Philippines started efforts to call back the U.S. military, but the U.S. remained unresponsive, although the two countries resumed joint military exercises in 2000.

Many of the troops at the bases in the Philippines were transferred to Okinawa. Kadena Air Base is now the U.S. military's largest facility overseas. Removing the military capacity there would mean the U.S. military would lose its command of the East China Sea. Okinawa is indisputably the cornerstone of the U.S. military strategy in the Pacific region.

Even so, U.S.-China relations have changed subtly over the past several years. It is now inconceivable that the U.S. will have a military conflict with China, because China is the largest holder of U.S. government bonds. Meanwhile, the East China Sea is still an important line of defense for Japan.

"Why do we have to protect Japan?"

U.S. finances are now in a critical situation, as seen from its decision to suspend the planned production of the superior fighter F-22 Raptor. Since Japan has offered host nation support (the

so-called omoiyari yosan or "sympathy budget"), the U.S. military's maintenance expenditures in Japan are less than those in the U.S. But the Hatoyama administration has proposed reducing sympathy budget allocations. If the sympathy budget is actually cut back, an increasing number of people in the U.S. are expected to begin to say: "Why do we have to defend Japan?"

When the Iraq war began in 2003, the U.S. military ordered the mobilization its 34th air combat team stationed in Inzirlik Air Base in Turkey. But the Turkish government, which has jurisdiction over the base facilities, banned the use of the base. The U.S. military was pressed to review its strategy and moved the combat team to a base in another country. Later, the U.S. set up a military base in Romania.

In the process of reorganizing U.S. forces in South Korea in 2004, the planned reduction in the number of troops by more than 10,000 drew a great deal of attention. For the U.S., however, it was more important to move its troops from an area near the military border with North Korea to the southern part of Seoul. A U.S. soldier was quoted as saying that although U.S. troops should fulfill the obligation of defending South Korea, it would be irrational if U.S. troops were killed before South Korean troops did.

Former deputy under secretary of defense Lawless, who was involved in negotiations on the Japan-U.S. accord reached in 2006, said: "The U.S. will leave Japan if Japan asks it to." An argument calling for scaling down the Japan-U.S. alliance has begun to emerge in the U.S. This argument is not necessarily only intended to apply pressure to Japan to have it follow what the U.S. says.

White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs made a statement in a press conference on Dec. 7 strongly urging Japan to implement the existing Futenma relocation plan. The questioner was Helen Thomas, 89. She has been a member of the White Press Corps since the days of the Kennedy government.

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In asking about the current state of Japan-U.S. relations, she brought up the war that occurred more than 50 years ago. She said: "Today is National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day. What approach is the President going to take towards the Japanese who are seeking the relocation of the base facility?" Although Japan believes the bilateral alliance remains firm, for Thomas, who was already 21 years old when World War II began, the current state of the alliance is no more than just a single scene in history.

(5) What does the Hague Convention stipulate?

ASAHI (Page 2) (Full)  
December 15, 2009

Question: I have heard there have been a lot of cases in which problems occur when international marriages end in divorce and one party takes their child back to his or her country. I have often seen the Hague Convention referred to in articles about such cases.

Mitsusada Enyo: The Hague Convention is formally called the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. The convention was adopted in 1980 in the Hague, the Netherlands; so it is commonly called the Hague Convention. At present, 81 countries have acceded to the convention. Among the Group of Seven (G-7) members, Japan is the only country that has not yet acceded to it. The United States and European countries have called on Japan to sign the convention.

Question: What will happen if Japan accedes to the convention?

Enyo: In signatory countries, if one parent takes his/her child to his/her home country without consulting the other parent, the other parent can request to have the child returned to the country where the child lived before resolving the question of which parent should eventually have the custody of their child. Even after a couple is divorced, they are still the parents of their children. The concept of the convention is that if one parent changes their child's living

conditions and removes the child from the other parent wrongfully, it will put the child at a disadvantage. In the U.S. and Europe, there are many countries in which both parents have custody of their children even after they get divorced. Therefore, child abduction is strongly criticized in the U.S. and Europe.

Question: How many have child abduction cases happened?

Enyo: There are no accurate statistics. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), however, has revealed that foreign governments have reported the following numbers of child abduction cases as of October 2009: the U.S. government has claimed 73 cases; the British government, 33; the Canadian government, 33, and the French government, 26. It appears that since international marriages have increased, problems have increased. In September, an American man was arrested for allegedly abducting his two children, who had returned to Japan with his ex-wife.

Question: I don't think it's good for one parent to take his/her child from the other parent. So, Japan should accede to the convention.

Enyo: Wives suffering from domestic violence by their husbands have strongly opposed the idea of Japan becoming a signatory country.

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Also Justice Minister Keiko Chiba is cautious about creating a system under which Japanese wives are obliged to return their children to their father's country when they have run into difficulties with their non-Japanese husbands. The justice minister said, "I'm concerned about victims of domestic violence. Japan uses a 'sole custody system' in which the custody of children is only given to one parent. So, there is a strong belief in Japan that mothers should have the custody of their children. This may be one reason why Japan is negative about acceding to the Hague Convention.

Question: What is the Japanese government's position?

Enyo: MOFA and the Justice Ministry have been studying the matter, but they appear to have been unable to deal with the problems. They should first study the child abduction situation, and then sort out the issues involving domestic law and the advantages of becoming a signatory country.

ROOS